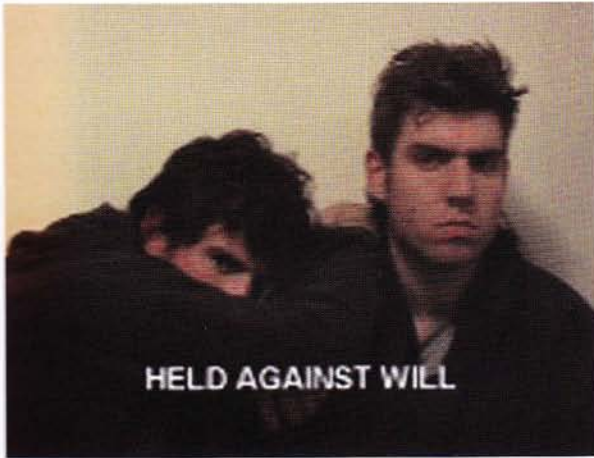


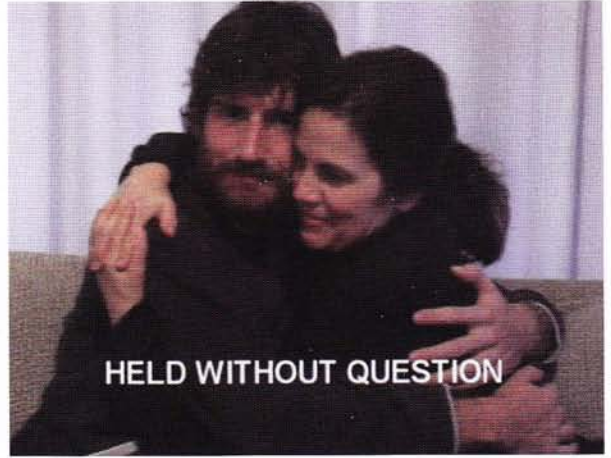


Jon Wah 1980–2008



Recollecting the first time Jonathan came to my attention is not difficult. It was the middle of the day and a The Bloodied Cunts performance was about to start. I didn't know what this meant but had heard the members of the band had stolen a goat as part of their act, so I went to see what all the fuss was all about. There was no goat (that I could recognise) but left of stage was a barbecue laden with an assortment of meats: kangaroo, crocodile, possibly goat. Who knows? The members emerged, one of them wearing a ripped red football sweater and underneath, his body smothered in yellow paint. This is what they called *Jon Wah*. The performance was the most remarkable thing I'd seen since moving from the country to study art. I was very moved by Jon Wah's words, 'Yes I fisted your sister, and then I pissed on her', but it was more about the way he said it. He began gyrating and spitting everywhere, getting saliva all over his beard and I thought to myself at that very moment, 'Now this is a *real* man. Please spit on me'. After this I saw him around Z Block, at the University of Western Sydney, and my crush got harder and harder. I obsessed about his jaw line and the way he didn't seem to give a fuck. I became increasingly curious about Jonathan to the point where I asked a mutual lecturer of ours whether she thought he was a good sort and if I should hunt him down. I was very pleased with her response:

*I find his intensity interesting. The first time we met was when he was my student in first year; it was like he radiated white hot light ... I think the thing he is most interested in is exchange of energy between people, and when he makes work it is about this exchange and transformation ... He was really blown away by Marina Abramović and Ulay's work ... He is wonderful, very sexy (insert 5,000 word essay on this topic) and definitely worth exploring and loving.*



Later that year Jonathan pashed me at the UWS grad show and I didn't look back after that, I fell (knee deep) in love with him. We shared a connection that was very powerful and truly rare. I have never met anyone as wild and beautiful as him or as bloody sexy as him (insert 8 million word diary entry). That man turned me inside out and I will always be grateful for him opening my eyes to the world (the *real* man that made me a woman). When Jonathan was away I used to wear that ripped red football shirt from The Bloodied Cunts, probably because it forever smelt of his sweat. I wish I had that shirt now but I can't really complain, because his precious mother let me keep the glass vial of toenails I had watched him carefully collect over the years.

#### Tameka Carter

What a handsome devil. I hadn't met anyone like him: the blue CityRail shirt that fell gently off his shoulder blades. Shaggy hair framing fine features. A nonchalant cigarette on the steps of Blaxland station. Over the years he went through so many incarnations that charmed, bewildered and infuriated me. But that's how I prefer to remember Jonathan: me as a nineteen year old girl and him as the sparkly eyed guy that enraptured my best friend, Tameka. If I could speak to Jonathan one more time I would thank him. Thank him for showing Tameka true and open love. Thank him for teaching her about boundless passion. Thank him for caring for her as much as she cared for him. I loved him if only for that.

#### Nicole Sergi

Facing Page: Jon Wah, *King of the loungeroom*, 2006, video still.

Above left: Jon Wah, *Held Against Will* from *Balaclava*, 2005, 3 channel video installation.

Above right: Jon Wah, *Held Against Will* from *Balaclava*, 2005, 3 channel video installation.





Ann Finegan: I loved The Bloodied Cunts, strictly as rumor. In Newcastle for Electrofringe I was too scared to see them live; Jon was going to vomit on the audience (but hadn't promised to drink only milk); the audience was kept waiting an hour (to build up anxiety and aggression), one song played, Jon nude and bright yellow on vocals with paint dripping out of his arse. Got his leg broken by the drummer.

Abe Powell: The wait was for two reasons: firstly Jon discovered that it is difficult to pour paint into your own anus. After a few attempts I had to make a paper funnel and have him bend over while I poured in half a litre or so of yellow paint. We were both totally drunk so this took about half an hour. Jon also used the excess weeping from his arse to style my hair into a shit cowlick. The main reason for the wait was simple nerves and shyness: Jon refused to go on and it was only after I started hitting him with an iron bar—the same I was to crack his leg with later—that he relented. We played about two bars before we just fell apart and went 'primal'. I can't really remember it but the video shows a woman yelling out 'Security' then someone else yelling out 'I know people!' Jon's reply: 'Oh! You know people do you? Then bring them to me!' Later in the gig Jon dived off stage and crash-tackled a heckler, reaching into his pants and pulling out handfuls of yellow paint mixed with shit—a weapon.

AF: Best Jon Wah lyrics: One One One One One, for the song's duration.

AP: This was in a group called The 3tards, made up of Jon Wah, Abe Powell and Ali Lowery.

AF: For a project in Jon's first year at art school, he arrived with guitar, did a line of speed, smoked a cigarette, strummed a horrible chord then burst into inconsolable Artaud-esque sobs. 'Are you okay man?' 'Acting man, just acting'. On another occasion Jon decided to make an olfactory work for Uni, though no project was due. He carried a bucket of fish guts back from the Sunday Sydney fish markets on the train and then stashed them in the drains around Z Block. The next day he didn't show for class but there was a terrible stink. No one found anything except traces of blood in the drains. The tech decided it had to be Jon. He confessed. Everyone concluded that birds had eaten the fish guts. The stink lasted a week.

AP: After the 2004 UWS grad show Jon and I stole six bottles of wine each from the bar, went to the after party and then started to head back to the city. Given that it was about 2am I'm not sure how we were planning to do this. As luck would have it there was a Westline bus parked at the Kingswood bus stop. The driver was resting, listening to the radio. Somehow we managed to bribe him with two bottles of fine red and had a chauffeur driven bus back to the city, radio blaring with Jon and I up the back cracking wine and smoking cigarettes out the window. We were dropped at my front door just as the sun was coming up.

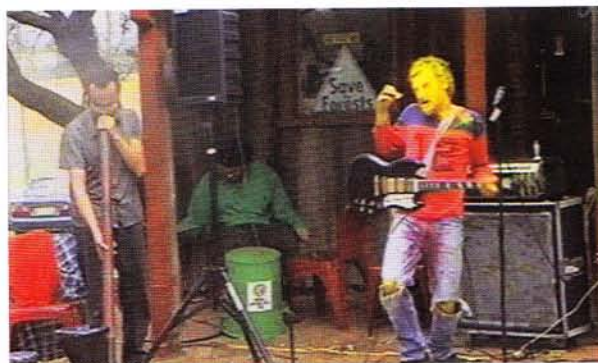
AF: Jon's *King of the Lounge* was an hour-long video installation, with sofa and stinky lounge room littered with beer, wine bottles, cigarette ash, various mess. Rumour had it that he had released fleas onto the sofa. I believed it.

**Ann Finegan & Abe Powell**

Above left: The Bloodied Cunts, performing at the Lansdowne Hotel, 2005.

Below left, above right and below right: Jon Wah, *King of the lounge*, 2006, video stills.





The 2004 UWS grad show after-party was at my house in Kingswood. As a result of an unfortunate incident with a ukulele, I cut my head open and was told (by someone with no qualification to do so) that I had a concussion, and thus couldn't sleep for the next ten hours and had to stay sober. Subsequently I was the last man standing at around 4am when the party finally died and Jon and Abe were looking for somewhere to crash. I didn't know them well at this stage—I knew them only by reputation, so I wasn't keen to have them hang around. Even if I wanted, there was no space to put them, with people even sleeping on the floor in front of the laundry. With some gentle coaxing, and many cuddles, I convinced Jon and Abe to leave and they set off into the night. The story of them convincing a bus driver to take them straight home has been going around ever since. It makes me so very happy that it's true.

**Daniel Green**

During one of Michael Keighery's lectures at UWS, Jon Wah, fuelled with alcohol and possibly acid, and covered in permanent marker scribbling, went to the lectern, mounted it, took off his shirt, dropped his pants to reveal a 'man-gina', and yelled at the distraught/laughing audience to 'Fucking come to The Bloodied Cunts gig or I'll kill ya'. This went on for about ten minutes until everyone had left. He carried on for another five or so minutes afterwards.

**Blake Freele**

Above and below left: Jon Wah, *King of the loungeroom*, 2006, video stills.

Above right: The Bloodied Cunts, performing at the cottage, Werrington Campus, University of Western Sydney, 2004.

Below right: Jon Wah, *King of the loungeroom*, 2006, video still.

I must say that initially I was a bit intimidated by Jon; I didn't quite know how to take him. One of my first encounters: early in first year at UWS, while at the Swamp Bar, Jon charged up to me, shirtless, his hair and face painted red and only inches from mine, screaming 'come and see The Bloodied Cunts or I'll defecate on ya'. Later that afternoon he made similar threats to everyone during a lecture, standing on the lectern with pants around his ankles. Another encounter: at the end of Honours year, the morning after the grad show opened, Jon's *King of the Loungeroom* installation was covered in white powder. Apparently, security had attempted to shut the work down the previous night and someone retaliated with a fire extinguisher. That morning I saw Jon in the hall—he charged up to me, gave me a hug and said, 'we got through it mate; I'm proud of ya'.

**Paul Greedy**

I met Jon when I was seven or eight years old at the Penrith Regional Gallery, where we attended a school holiday workshop on the Pueblo Indians, but hung out all day making trouble. He lived close to the city and I in the Blue Mountains, so that was that. It was a good day of art and troublemaking and that was that. Then, after I got back from school holidays, there was this new kid in my class! It led to a life of art and trouble.

**Matt Chaumont**



Jon used to play a game called 'knock and staunch'. The object of this game was to knock loudly on someone's front door and proceed to stand there indefinitely. Jon confided in me once that he originally wanted to be an actor, but had 'trouble' with directors. So he went to art school. Matt Chaumont and I did a sound performance at Blacktown Arts Centre a few years ago. Part of the performance involved vibrating a seven metre long piece of industrial tubing with sub-driven low frequencies. Jon was already off the rails by this point and proceeded to 'fuck' the tube for most of the twenty minute performance. We made sure not to let him know where our gigs were for the next year or so.

#### Pete Newman

Jon Wah was my art school anti-hero. Before I met Jon I would not have thought that it's a good idea to drink half a bladder of cask wine under the table ... in a licensed venue ... 15 minutes before a lecture. But Jon embarked on these ventures with such bravado and enthusiasm that any negative thoughts I might have had in his company seemed to turn and flee at the sight of the devious glint in his eye and his massive ear-to-ear grin. What I admired about Jon was that he seemed to me to be free in a way that I couldn't begin to imagine, I saw him as a man unrestrained by fashion, convention or decorum. He could whip through a room like a small localised tornado leaving in his wake damaged artworks, broken glass, bodily fluids, ruffled clothes and dismayed witnesses struggling to comprehend what had just taken place, 'Did that man just hump my leg?' To me Jon was a force of nature with this restless fucking energy that neither he nor anyone else could hope to control, like a comet on its first and final trajectory incapable of reversing the momentum it has steadily been gaining.

#### Robin Hungerford

We were reminiscing bits about UWS in Hunter's backyard the other day. Sam mentioned The Bloodied Cunts gig over at the cottage at Werrington. They were billed to play for Racial Harmony day, and coarse language to be avoided at the request of administration. 'Cunt' was the first word Jon muttered and the university chaplain removed himself from the scene as quickly as possible. A goat had been walked a few kilometres from Flynn's place in Kingswood for the gig and it too had been given a microphone. This was one of the few times Jon had a competitor in the attention stakes.

#### Monica Brooks

As a co-director of Electrofringe the year we did Plover Idol, I was totally blown away by the insanity and efforts people put in, especially The Bloodied Cunts. Even more interesting was when I met the mild mannered, articulate and relaxed Jon Wah back in Sydney weeks later. I got to film Jon in the studio for my work, just me and him. He took great pleasure and time painting every orifice of his body red. After the performance we had a beer; he didn't want any payment and said that when he got paid for a Cunts performance then it was useless, over, a waste.

#### Wade Marynowsky

My lasting memory of Jon Wah: it was an opening at Pelt and Jon was in fine form. I can't remember which opening as he came to many and caused trouble at most. On this occasion, the last we saw of him was as he jumped into the boot of a taxi, slammed shut by Tameka. It drove off, the driver unaware of his boot's occupant.

#### Caleb K.

In first year Creative Strategies at UWS, one of Jon's works, *Sound over Time*, was to walk across a flat oval to the swamp and wait for some time until he turned to face myself and a group of students as a speck in the distance. Then he screamed an inaudible scream. We continued to wait until he returned to the group. It was four years later in 2006 that I found myself waiting again for Jon. This time it was at his Honours examination. A very remorseful Jon explained that he was not ready. It was a few weeks later that we returned to view and examine Jon's *King of the Loungeroom*. In my examiner's report I wrote, '[Wah] has a wonderful energy and an infectious imagination. This unbridled energy has resulted in a project that is a very ambitious—the film. [Wah] has applied himself to positions of scriptwriter, producer, director, cameraman, actor, soundman and editor. This is a great feat for any student in one year and I congratulate him for completing this work. It is an entertaining and successful result ... the work explores ideas and involves close observation of the complexities of living in a society riddled with unfairness and inequalities.'

#### Robyn Backen

I first met Jon at UWS when Terry Hayes invited Robyn Backen and I to examine his Honours work *King of the Loungeroom*—an outrageously bad taste sit-com about depraved and boozing art school bogans. Jon installed the video in a mock lounge room piled high with detritus: beer bottles, cigarette butts, porn. He infested the sofas with fleas and pissed everywhere to make it authentic. Months later I asked Jon to participate in my art project *Funeral Songs*, where over 150 artists and curators nominated the music to be played at their imagined funeral. Jon told me in an email that he was 'having a lot of fun thinking about it' but was deliberating over which song to choose. Jon made his decision after three months of consideration: the MTV Unplugged version of *Down in a Hole* by Alice in Chains. It wasn't played at his funeral, but it plays in my head whenever I think about him now.

#### Daniel Mudie Cunningham

## Terence Hayes

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From: kingoftheloungeroom@hotmail.com  
Sent: Monday, 21 August 2006 3:53 AM  
To: Terence Hayes  
Subject: CHARAC TERRRRROS (oh yeah the shiz)

Attachments: KING OF THE LOUNGEROOM.doc



KING OF THE  
LOUNGEROOM.doc (2  
PING,

sup,,  
here is my potentionalllllllllllll list of cunts for the shit-com  
we have a date in your digs tomorrow at 11. don't be A - date.  
i won't, for all types of killwer.  
big up to the hirutes.  
sorry my nose is blokd. "no sence of shhpell."  
got heaps of composite video for your plug hole (ad's for jebusk)  
heaps to discuss - i'll bring the port - or maybe beer - as i'm about to apply for my  
second loan. (groan) (into a ..... ) (hecs sic-le) oh (please let me be) (gon.)))))  
stressed to impress (ooooo it feels goot)  
your known lover  
jon bra  
(find your own way in)  
pisssasssss ... i'm welting

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Nothing but cars & over 100,000 of them at carsales.com.au  
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